

Biography of John Plant, Maryland 400 veteran

## John Plant (?-1808)

**Private, First Maryland Regiment, 1776**

**Corporal, First Maryland Regiment, 1776-1778**

**Sergeant, First Maryland Regiment, 1778-1779**

**Ensign, Maryland Regiment Extraordinary, 1780**

**Lieutenant, Maryland Regiment Extraordinary, 1780-1781**

On January 24, 1776, John Plant enlisted as a private in Captain [John Hoskins Stone](#)'s First Company of the First Maryland Regiment, in Port Tobacco, Maryland. [1] Reportedly, as one of his ancestors recounted years later, he enlisted when he was "very young" and served throughout the war. [2] Many of those in the First Company were recruited from Charles County. The company trained in Annapolis until they departed for New York. [3]

The First Maryland Regiment were the first troops Maryland raised at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. Maryland was more than willing to do its part to recruit the men needed to fill the Continental Army's depleted ranks. [4] A few days after independence was declared, the First Maryland Regiment were ordered to New York so it could join the forces of General George Washington. The regiment arrived there in early August, with the Battle of Brooklyn set between the Continental Army and the British Army, joined by their Hessian allies.

Plant served with twenty-six-year-old Stone and his company at the Battle of Brooklyn in late August 1776. Unlike the companies of [Barton Lucas](#), [Daniel Bowie](#), [Peter Adams](#), [Benjamin Ford](#), and [Edward Veazey](#), only fifteen percent of the First Company were either killed or captured, with these other companies suffering heavier losses. Few were killed, while the company's ensign, [James Farnandis](#), was captured by British forces. [5] Even so, the loss of life by the other companies confirmed the assessment of the British Parliament's *Annual Register* which [described](#) how "almost a whole regiment from Maryland...of young men from the best families in the country was cut to pieces" even as the battle brought the men of the Maryland 400 together. [6]

The Battle of Brooklyn, the first large-scale battle of the war, fits into the larger context of the Revolutionary War. If the Maryland Line had not stood and fought the British, enabling the rest of the Continental Army to escape, then the Continental Army would have been decimated, resulting in the end of the Revolutionary War. This heroic stand gave the regiment the nickname of the Old Line and those who made the stand in the battle are remembered as the Maryland 400.

Plant survived the Battle of Brooklyn, like most of the First Company. On December 10, 1776, he re-enlisted in the First Maryland Regiment as a corporal. [7] He was furloughed in May 1778. Despite this, he likely fought at the Battles of White Plains (1776), Brandywine (1777), Germantown (1777), and Monmouth (1778).

As a non-commissioned officer, Plant would have shouldered some of the responsibility for ensuring order in camp and on the battlefield. The job of the corporals was to instruct their troops, keep order in their regiments, including breaking up disagreements between soldiers, and taking roll call every

morning. [8] If corporals fell down on their tasks, they were "severly punished." [9] During battles, corporals were responsible for keeping the companies lined up and together so they could effectively fight against British or forces loyal to the Crown.

In July 1778, Plant was promoted to the rank of sergeant, a non-commissioned officer, and served until December 1779. [10] A sergeant like Plant had an important role in the Maryland Line. As non-commissioned officers, their duties included maintaining discipline within their company, and inspecting the new recruits. [11] Their other duties included carrying sick soldiers to the hospital as needed, reporting on the sickness of men within the ranks, and leading groups of men to guard prisoners or supplies if circumstances required it. [12] For these services they were paid more than corporals in Maryland, who they oversaw, and worked with, to keep order in place in the company, including breaking up disputes between soldiers. [13] In order to get in this position, however, their field officers or captains had to recommend them for promotion. [14]

In July 1780, Plant joined a new unit called the Regiment Extraordinary as an ensign. [15] He was promoted to Lieutenant in September. This regiment was created to reinforce the Continental Army and organized in the summer of 1780 mainly because of casualties. [16] The regiment, which recruited across Maryland, included former deserters from the Maryland Line, had little combat experience and was commanded by [Alexander Lawson Smith](#). [17] This unit, which had problems due to deserting soldiers and supplies, marched from Prince George's County to Philadelphia, going to Head of Elk, then went back down the Chesapeake Bay to Annapolis to gain more recruits. [18] One commanding officer of another regiment even told George Washington that soldiers in the Regiment Extraordinary were "entirely destitute of Cloathing of every kind," including their uniforms of [red-lined brown coats](#), and that "many Deserters from the Line of this State Troops have been taken up, who I have sent forward to the southern Army...it is with Real Concern I observe to your Excellency that there is no Prospect of procuring Men to fill up the Regiments." [19]

Staying in the state capital for some time, the regiment, including Maryland 400 veterans such as [Charles Smith](#) and [Josias Miller](#), marched to southward in December 1780 to join General [Nathaniel Greene](#)'s Southern campaign. [20] The unit was the opposite of the First Maryland Regiment. The regiment refused to join the main Continental Army because of disputes over rank. [21] However, the unit commanders, who felt they should lead the soldiers who they trained for the past six months, were dismissed, with the consent of General Greene, and veteran officers took charge. As a result, the unit was changed into the Second Maryland Regiment before the [Battle of Guilford Courthouse](#) on March 15, 1781. As a result, Plant likely resigned in January 1781.

After his military service, Plant settled down in Charles County. In 1783, he was a small farmer and slaveowner who owned two horses, one cattle, and one enslaved black child. [22] On June 15, 1788, Plant married an eighteen-year-old woman named Mary Ann Davis. [23] He later reminisced about his revolutionary service with his cousin, William Stewart, who said that Plant had "strict integrity" and good character. [24]

In later years, Plant and his wife moved to what became Washington D.C. At the time, it was a largely rural and sparsely populated area which had thriving ports at Georgetown and Alexanders, in addition

to the federal town of Washington City, which had about 8,200 inhabitants. [25] Planters and over 7,900 enslaved blacks living in the area were an important part of D.C.'s society. [26] Plant died there on November 14, 1808. [27]

After Plant's death, his wife, Mary Ann, fought to receive Plant's pension payments. In February 1835, she asked for "remuneration" for her husband's military service from the U.S. House of Representatives, and following year asked the same from the U.S. Senate. [28] By 1838, at sixty-eight-years-old, she petitioned the federal government for pension benefits. However, because Plant either had no official discharge papers or had lost them, Mary Ann had trouble receiving money. [29] Her fate is not known.

- Burkely Hermann, *Maryland Society of the Sons of American Revolution Research Fellow, 2016.*

## Notes

[1] Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution *Archives of Maryland Online* vol. 18, [6](#); Pension of John Neal, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, NARA M804, Record Group 15, Roll 1803, pension number W.19054. Courtesy of Fold3.com; Pension of John Plant, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, NARA M804, Record Group 15, Roll 1942, pension number W. 26908. Courtesy of Fold3.com.

[2] Pension of John Plant.

[3] Mark Andrew Tacyn, "'To the End:' The First Maryland Regiment and the American Revolution" (PhD diss., University of Maryland College Park, 1999), 21.

[4] Arthur Alexander, "How Maryland Tried to Raise Her Continental Quotas." *Maryland Historical Magazine* 42, no. 3 (1947), 187-188, 196.

[5]Return of the Three Independent Companies and First Regiment of Maryland Regulars, in the service of the United Colonies, commanded by Colonel Smallwood, Sept. 13, 1776, National Archives, NARA M804, Record Group 93, Roll 0034, courtesy of Fold3.com; Return of the First Regiment of Maryland Regulars in the service of the United Colonies Commanded by William Smallwood, Oct. 11, 1776, p. 92-93, National Archives, NARA M804, Record Group 93, Roll 0034, folder 35, courtesy of Fold3.com.

[6] Tacyn, 4.

[7] Service Card of John Plant, Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army During the Revolutionary War, National Archives, Record Group 93, NARA M881, Roll 0398. Courtesy of Fold3.com; Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution, *Archives of Maryland Online* vol. 18, [149](#).

[8] [Frederick Stueben, \*Regulations for Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States, Part I\* \(Philadelphia: Styner and Cist, 1779\)](#), 6, 82, 98-100.

[9] [Stueben, 72.](#)

[10] Service Card of John Plant; Rolls of 1st Maryland Regiment, Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783, National Archives, Record Group 93, NARA M246, Roll 0033. Courtesy of Fold3.com; Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution, *Archives of Maryland Online* vol. 18, [149](#); Journal and Correspondence of the Council of Maryland, 1779-1780, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 43, [10](#), [118](#); Payment to Sgt. John Plant, Dec. 27, 1779, Maryland State Papers, Revolutionary Papers, MdHR 19970-03-07/15 [MSA S997-3-920, 1/7/3/9]; Tacyn, 302-303.

[11] James Thacher, *A Military Journal During the American Revolutionary War, from 1775 to 1783* (Boston: A. Richardson and Lord, 1823), 458, 468-470, 473, 475, 483-484, 520; Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety, July 7-December 31, 1776 *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 12, [145](#); Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution *Archives of Maryland Online* vol. 18, [335](#).

[12] Journal and Correspondence of the Council of Maryland, 1781-1784, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 48, [343](#); Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety, July 7-December 31, 1776, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 12, [125](#), [255](#); Journal of the Maryland Convention July 26 to August 14, 1775, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 11, [50](#); Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland, 1774-1776, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 78, [23](#); Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety, August 29, 1775 to July 6, 1776, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 11, [439](#); Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety, January 1-March 20, 1777, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 16, [334](#).

[13] Thatcher, 45, 73, 476; Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland, 1774-1776, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 78, [92](#).

[14] Journal and Correspondence of the Council of Maryland, 1779-1780, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 43, [71](#).

[15] Journal and Correspondence of the Council of Maryland, 1779-1780, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 43, [234](#), [273](#), [326](#), [327](#), [336](#), [337](#), [339](#), [340](#); Journal and Correspondence of the Council of Maryland, 1781-1784, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 48, [58](#).

[16] Journal and Correspondence of the Council of Maryland, 1781, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 47, [177](#); Journal and Correspondence of the Council of Maryland, 1779-1780, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 43, [216](#), [335](#), [336](#); Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution, *Archives of Maryland Online* vol. 18, [361](#), [362](#); Journal and Correspondence of the Council of Maryland, 1780-1781, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 45, [5](#); Beverley Waugh Bond, *State Government in Maryland, 1777-1781* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1905), 38; *Journals of Congress: Containing the Proceedings from January 1, 1780 to January 1, 1781* (Philadelphia: David C. Claypoole, 1781), 341-342.

[17] Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution, *Archives of Maryland Online* vol. 18, [342](#); Journal and Correspondence of the Council of Maryland, 1779-1780, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 43, [273](#); Pension of Alexander Lawson Smith,

Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, NARA M804, Record Group 15, Roll 2208, pension number W. 4247. Courtesy of Fold3.com.

[18] Journal and Correspondence of the Council of Maryland, 1780-1781, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 45, [24](#), [56](#).

[19] “[To George Washington from Uriah Forrest, 17 August 1780](#),” *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified July 12, 2016.

[20] “[To George Washington from Mordecai Gist, 26 October 1780](#),” *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified July 12, 2016; Pension of Josias Miller; Rolls of Extraordinary Regiment, 1780, Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783, National Archives, NARA M246, Record Group 93, folder 28, roll 0034. Courtesy of Fold3.com; Pension of Theodore Middleton, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, NARA M804, Record Group 15, Roll 1720, pension number S. 11,075. Courtesy of Fold3.com; *Resolutions, laws, and ordinances, relating to the pay, half pay, commutation of half pay, bounty lands, and other promises made by Congress to the officers and soldiers of the Revolution: to the settlement of the accounts between the United States and the several states; and to funding the revolutionary debt* (Washington: Thomas Allen, 1838), 415-416, 490. Other veterans included Matthew Garner, Samuel Hanson, Charles Magruder, [Samuel Luckett](#), Vachel Burgess, Francis Shepard, and John Bryan.

[21] Lawrence E. Babits and Joshua B. Howard, *Long, Obstinate, and Bloody: The Battle of Guilford Courthouse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 70-71, 148; Robert K. Wright, Jr., *The Continental Army* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 1983), 278; Patrick O'Kelley, *Nothing But Blood and Slaughter: The Revolutionary War in the Carolinas* Vol. 3: 1781 (Lillington, NC: Blue House Tavern Press, 2005), 504.

[22] John Plant assessment record, 1783, General Assembly House of Delegates, Assessment Record, CH, Seventh District, General, p. 9 [MSA S1161-52, 1/4/5/48]. The child was male and under age eight.

[23] Pension of John Plant.

[24] Pension of John Plant. Sadly, the specifics of what Plant told his cousin are not known.

[25] J. D. Dickey, *Empire of Mud: The Secret History of Washington, DC* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), ix, xiv, xvii, 1, 3, 4, 7-9, 12, 14-15, 17, 19-22, 24-25, 28, 31; Tom Lewis, *Washington: A History of Our National City* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), xx, 1, 10, 14, 20, 24. The estimate of population comes from data assembled by Social Explorer for [the 1810 census](#).

[26] According to data assembled by Social Explorer for [the 1810 census](#), the rural Washington County, a jurisdiction within D.C., had only about 2,300 residents, a county Plant may have lived in. This data also shows 7,944 non-white persons, excluding Indians, living in D.C. in 1810.

[27] Pension of John Plant.

[28] *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States: Being the Second Session of the Twenty-Third Congress, Begun and Held at the City of Washington, and in the Fifty-Ninth Year of the Independence of the United States* (Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1835), 390; "Twenty-Fourth Congress First Session," *Daily National Intelligencer*, Washington, D.C., April 26, 1836, Vol. XXIV, issue 7240, p. 3.

[29] Pension of John Plant. As one ancestor put it years later, this situation led to Mary Ann almost being "deprived of a pension."

<http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc3500/sc3520/016800/016811/html/16811bio.html>